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## Sermon for Pentecost.

Acts 2, 14—47.

The words which precede our text treat of the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Ghost, which we considered this morning. They told us that, when the day of Pentecost was fully come and the apostles were all with one accord in one place, there suddenly came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. When this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, "What meaneth this?" Others, mocking, said, "These men are full of new wine."

This last remark, the remark of the scoffers, that the apostles were full of new wine, called forth a reply; and it was Peter, the same Peter that once had been so timid in the presence of a maid, who now, in the presence of this great multitude, spoke boldly and powerfully. And what he said in the name of all the apostles is the first sermon which they preached. Hence let us dwell this evening on

### THE FIRST APOSTOLIC SERMON.

Let us consider:

I. *Its contents,*      II. *Its effect.*

#### I.

Our text says: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is

but the third hour of the day.” Peter begins to defend the apostles against the accusation that they were drunk. He is not silent to the calumny heaped upon them. He shows that it is unreasonable to consider them drunk, since it is but nine o’clock in the morning, and men, when drunk, are generally not drunk so early in the morning. It is not a personal matter of Peter’s or the apostles’, but a matter which concerned the Holy Ghost and the Church of God. Where God’s Word, or God’s Spirit, or God’s Church, or God’s minister, is slandered or mocked, there the Christian dare not remain silent, but must open his mouth and defend what is holy and dear to him. This we learn from Peter’s defense of the apostles.

We learn here also *how* we are to do this. Note how few and short and plain the apostle’s words are! It is not advisable to waste words on scoffers. Note, too, how composed and collected the apostle was when he spoke! He did not get excited or angry and speak harshly. And yet how sharp and pointed are his words, showing the unreasonableness of the accusation! In like manner should we speak when it is our duty to defend the things of God.

Having shown that it was not wine which made the apostles able to speak in new and many languages, St. Peter proceeds to show *who* it was that gave them that ability. He says: “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” Though Moses, Gideon, David, Elijah, and others in the Old Testament had God’s Spirit, yet the Spirit was given out sparingly in those days. The *outpouring* of the Spirit was reserved for the New Testament. That time, Peter would say, has now come, for God’s Spirit has now been poured out upon the apostles, and has enabled them to speak with other tongues. And this same Spirit, who has just been poured out upon the apostles, shall also, in this New Testament time, be poured out upon young men and old men, and upon servants and handmaidens, to enlighten and comfort and strengthen them. Verily, a happy, blessed time, the time of the New Testament!

But it is also a *solemn* time, a time of solemn preparation for “that great and notable day of the Lord,” the day of judgment, for God says in our text: “I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come

to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The signs that are coming to pass in heaven above and in the earth beneath should move men to prepare for the coming of the Lord, move them to prepare for the day of judgment, move them to call upon the name of the Lord, *i. e.*, to flee for refuge to Jesus Christ, for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Having thus shown how it was possible for the apostles to speak in languages which they had never learned, namely, because the Spirit of God had been poured out upon them, St. Peter turns to the real subject of his discourse, which is Jesus Christ. Observe what he says here, in this first apostolic sermon, concerning Jesus. Four things he mentions. He speaks of Jesus as crucified, as risen, as exalted, and as the Lord and Christ.

First, Peter speaks of Jesus as *crucified*. He says: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know; Him, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." What boldness and what courage did it require to utter these words, to tell the Jews to their face that they had murdered the Son of God and their own Messiah! And yet how calmly and majestically did Peter remind them of their bloodguiltiness!

Even so to-day Christ must be preached as *crucified*, *i. e.*, also to-day men must be made to feel their guilt by being told that Christ was crucified *because of their sins*, as we sing:

*My burden, in Thy passion,  
Lord, Thou hast borne for me,  
For it was my transgression  
Which brought this woe on Thee.*

*Ah! I also and my sin  
Wrought Thy deep affliction,  
This the real cause hath been  
Of Thy crucifixion.*

In the second place, Peter speaks of Jesus as *risen*. He says: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." "This Jesus," *i. e.*, the Jesus whom you and your sins have crucified, and whose resurrection David already predicted, this Jesus God has raised from the dead, and we are witnesses of this.

The apostles loved to style themselves "witnesses of Christ's resurrection," for Christ's resurrection was the testimony of God

concerning His Son, the seal of Christ's redemption, the confirmation of His Gospel, the alpha and omega of their preaching.

Even so to-day Christ must be preached as *risen*, *i. e.*, also to-day men must be told that Christ was delivered for their offenses, and was raised again for their justification. Or, in the words of the poet:

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;  
Christ has burst the gates of hell.  
Death in vain forbids His rise;  
Christ has opened Paradise.

In the third place, Peter speaks of Christ as *exalted*. He says: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Reference is here made, not merely to Christ's ascension, but to His exaltation, to the full and unceasing use of His divine power which He had received according to His human nature. Being exalted to the right hand of God, He now fulfilled the promise, made prior to His exaltation, and sent the Holy Ghost, who endowed the apostles with the gift of tongues.

Also to-day Jesus must be preached as exalted, preached as sending the same Spirit whom He shed on His apostles, preached as guiding and guarding and helping and comforting and instructing and warning and saving His people, and thereby fulfilling His promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Finally, St. Peter speaks of Jesus as *the Lord and Christ*. He says: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." It was a bold thing for a poor unknown Galilean to hurl such words into the face of a hostile, unbelieving world, and yet how wonderfully were those words fulfilled! To-day those words are not merely a prophecy, but also an historic fact, for the banner of the cross has been unfurled in every country on earth. The Jews then were to know that the Jesus whom they had crucified was made of God "the Lord," *i. e.*, the King and Ruler of all; and not only "the Lord," but also "the Christ," *i. e.*, the Messiah, the Anointed One and promised Savior. And this they were to know "assuredly," *i. e.*, there could be no question about it, for David's prophecies, and the life and death of Jesus, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, were indubitable proofs of it.

Even so to-day Jesus must be preached as the Lord and Christ, *i. e.*, as He who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, the mighty

God; and as the only Mediator between God and men, the only Savior from sin, Satan, death, and hell, for there is salvation in none other, neither is there any other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. O happy men whose Lord and Christ is Jesus of Nazareth!

Having thus learned the contents of the first apostolic sermon, let us now consider its effect.

## II.

We read: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Behold the powerful effect of Peter's sermon! It pierced the hearts and consciences of his hearers. You have, therefore, here an illustration of the truth that "the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Peter's words, addressed to the Jews, "God hath made that Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," pierced their hearts like a two-edged sword. That is the right effect of a sermon, if it pierces the heart, not only the ear, but the conscience, and moves men to ask, "What shall we do? how can we be saved?" O happy they whose conscience has been aroused, and who ask this question!

Peter answered those who asked him: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "Repent, and be baptized," or, "Repent, and believe the Gospel." As John the Baptist and Christ Himself, even so the apostles preached repentance. All true Christianity begins with repentance, with a godly sorrow of heart, with a heartfelt longing for pardon and peace in Christ. And they who had thus repented could be told, Be baptized in the name of Him whom God has made both Lord and Christ, *i. e.*, your Savior.

Also to-day, my brethren, when men ask, "What shall we do? how can we be saved?" no other answer should be given them than, "Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins," or, which is the same thing, "Repent, and believe the Gospel!" All men have need to repent, be it of great sins or of little sins. And he who has repented, who is sorry for his sin, should not despair, but firmly believe that God for Christ's sake will forgive him. And where this is done, there Baptism shows its power and efficacy, and fruit and blessing. Where this is done, there men have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, are sanctified, and will lead a pious and godly life.

And the promise is not only to them, but also to their children, as the apostle says: "For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord, our God, shall call." O blessed words! What a sweet comfort is contained in them for wounded, bleeding hearts! And since they have been uttered, how many that were afar off have been brought nigh through them, and have been saved from the untoward generation of this world, have been changed from sinners into saints, from children of Satan into children of God, from heirs of hell into heirs of heaven!

The effect, then, of the first apostolic sermon was, not that men were entertained, but that men were converted, and through the conversion of those men a large congregation was gathered. We read: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." That was indeed a rich harvest! Does it not remind us of Jesus' words: "Look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest"? Does it not remind us of Peter's draught of fishes on the Lake of Gennesaret? Then the Lord told him, "Henceforth thou shalt catch men." Now the Lord's saying was fulfilled. The Gospel-net had been let down, and three thousand souls were inclosed. The same net is let down also to-day, and though such large numbers are not caught any more at one time, yet here and there and now and then a soul is drawn out of the sea of this world into the ship of Christ, the Church.

Note, also, the Christian fellowship which was effected by the first apostolic sermon. We read: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." The three thousand who had just been converted were, of course, not yet thoroughly instructed in the way of salvation, and hence they "continued" in the apostles' doctrine, did as Jesus once said: "If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Daily," we read, "they continued with one accord in the temple." So eager and anxious were they to hear the Word of God. So did they love it. No wonder that the blessing of God rested on them. How many Christians of to-day does this example put to shame! But where people are willing to be thoroughly instructed in the Word of God, and regularly attend divine services, there God's blessing will not be lacking.

Observe, also, that those first Christians "continued in the breaking of bread and in prayers," *i. e.*, they communed often and had family worship. Moreover, their social intercourse was of a beautiful nature. They would visit each other from house to house, and

were all of one heart and one mind and one soul. This is not only plainly taught in the text, but it appears also from the fact that they had all things common. We read: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." The Gospel did not *demand* of them to sell what they had, and have all things common, but their *first love* moved them to it. Not did they practice the communism of the present day. No; their communism was: "What is mine, is thine." The communism of to-day is: "What is thine, is mine!" Their communism was: "Receive what I have!" The communism of to-day is: "Give what thou hast!" Moreover, it was only this first congregation that had all things common, and even that congregation tried this but for a short time, for soon it became impracticable.

This, then, was the effect of the first apostolic sermon on those who became Christians. They, however, who would not believe were awed into silence and fear and dread, for we read: "And fear came upon every soul."

Finally, we read of those first Christians that they "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people." O that we, too, might always eat our meat with gladness and singleness of heart, and constantly praise God and find favor with the people.—"And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Let us ask the Lord to add also to our church daily such as shall be saved, and to keep us, who belong to it, steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end. May He grant this to us for Christ's sake. Amen. O. K.

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### Funeral Discourse on Ps. 116, 13.

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Your home, beloved mourners, has become a house of desolation. Our church has been made a tabernacle of lamentations. The demise of your sainted daughter and sister and of our fellow-heiress in Christ makes us feel like that ancient parent felt, when he uttered his grief in these words: "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." We weep as the church wept in the dawn of the New Testament over the cruel destruction of her infants: "Rachel weepeth for her children, and would not be comforted, for they are not." I know your present sentiments are such as the stricken Psalmist uttered: "Unless Thy Law had been my delights, I should have perished in my affliction." To this Law, then, let me invite your attention as to the loadstar in the darkest night of human misery:

“PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF  
HIS SAINTS.”

The leading features of our text evidently are its teachings concerning:

- I. *The saints of the Lord;*
- II. *Their death's preciousness in His sight.*

I.

The saints of the Lord are, in the first place, such men and women as profess themselves altogether sinful in the sight of the Lord, and sanctified only and altogether by the blood of Christ. The language of God's saints from the gates of Paradise Lost has always run thus: “I acknowledged my sins unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this every one that is *godly* shall pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found.” And again: “For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.” And again: “But ye are washed, but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The sanctity of Christ’s life and death, which they grasp in faith, makes them holy in the sight of the Lord.

Our sainted sister in the Lord, whose mortal remains now rest before this altar, was not ashamed to acknowledge her sins before God, and to be found among the penitent, though by her virtues she outshone the wicked and the nominal professors of religion.

The saints of the Lord are, in the second place, such men and women as live in communion with Christ’s holy Church and with her ministrations. Shunning the world and its evil company, its evil doctrines, conversations, and manners in high and low places, true Christians also comport themselves in agreement with the following divine statements: “Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might *sanctify* and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” And again: “*Sanctify* them, O Lord, in Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.” And again: “Unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are *sanctified* in Christ Jesus, *called to be saints*, with all that in every place call upon the name of our Lord.”

Our deceased sister was a member of our church from her infancy. She never faltered in her adherence to the divine ministrations. She was conscientious in her attendance upon congregational services and in her private devotions. She was steadfast in

her profession: "I believe that the Holy Ghost in the holy Christian Church daily and richly forgives all sins unto me and all believers, and will raise up me and all the dead, and will give unto me and all believers eternal life. This is most certainly true."

The saints of God are, in the third place, such men and women as serve God with holy and righteous works. This proposition is confirmed by the following divine attestations: "That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve Him without fear *in holiness* and righteousness all the days of our life." And of your daughter Lilly's namesake, Elisabeth, we read: "She was righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God blameless." And St. Peter exhorts married women thus: "Wives, let your conversation be chaste, coupled with fear, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of the Lord of great price.... For after this manner in the old times the *holy* women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord."

Our sainted sister was certainly a devoted wife as she had been a dutiful daughter. Young as she was, she cheerfully took part in the good works of this congregation and in the charitable works of its ladies' circle.

The saints of the Lord are, in the fourth place, such men and women as set an example by their continued Christian patience. "Here is the patience and faith of the saints." And again we read: "Who are those which are arrayed in white robes? These are they which came out of great tribulation." And *widows* are informed: "Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day."

The self-sacrificing example of our departed sister's patience became more than known during her late husband's prolonged illness. In her own disease I always found her composed and resigned to the gracious will of God whose face she sought in fervent prayer and by repeatedly partaking of Holy Communion. Oh, how she delighted to hear the Christian songs and cheering childlike words of faith spoken by her little nephews and nieces!

## II.

Now let us direct our attention to the second main feature of our text: "*Precious* in the sight of the Lord is the *death* of His saints."

Their death is precious in His sight, because He never forsakes them in the hour of greatest peril. The Lord supported His saints

in life by innumerable tokens of kindness granted to body and soul, both temporal and spiritual blessings. Our departed sister received from His hands numerous divine benefits which called for her gratitude. Angelic hosts protected her against the Evil One. She was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. She always enjoyed the benefactions of loving parents, the life-long care of a fond mother, the respect and affections of her brothers, sisters, and other relatives, as well as of the fellow-members of her church. Her married life was crowned by the unfaltering fidelity also on the part of her husband. Though from infancy she had been of a frail body, she was well taken care of to her blessed end.

Now after verifying all the promises concerning this present life of His saints, do you think the Lord may be found wanting in His oath concerning their final issue? *Your* greatest care of our departed sister was in her *last* days and hours. Now we know that God's love and care exceed the most fervent and constant human love and care, consequently also of yours. And it is He who tells you to-day: "The death of your departed saint is precious in my sight."

But wherein does this preciousness consist? Benighted reason tells us: Death is the greatest misfortune that may befall us. The departure from this present life puts an end to all our hopes, glory, enjoyments, possessions, and connections. Therefore unholy men, women, and children hate the very name of death even in their dying hour. They stand in dread of the destroyer! Moreover, God Himself tells us: "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish, and the hope of unjust men perisheth. Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh."

But over against this awful retribution the Lord assures His saints: "Their death is precious in His sight." Their death is His finishing touch to their life. When you pave a street or build a wall, you are assuredly not afraid to put in the last stone, nor do you weep tears of agony thereat, because you know it to be the crowning of your work.

So in the death of your saint and of His saint the Lord Himself covered her last fault, took out her last imperfection, made the last stitch in her robe of sinlessness. She has reached the true goal of human life, the divinely intended outcome of His labors, of your labors and of her labors; of His pains, of your cares, of her afflictions. She appears now before His throne in perfect sanctity, renewed fully to the image of our Creator, which image mankind lost in the sinful downfall of our race. Do not, then, I beseech you,

weep and lament to-day as though you had no hope at the coffin and burial of a perfected saint.

But the death of God's saints is precious also, because they are the gainers in the exchange. You would certainly neither weep nor lament if you should exchange ten dollars for a million, a tottering ruin for a palace. Now the Lord assures us that He cannot deny His saints in their death, because their souls are wrapped in His Word and promise, and where His promise remains, there their souls must remain. But their souls are wrapped by implicit faith in His promise of a better, of an eternal life. "This is the promise which we have, eternal life," the Holy Spirit teaches. If we only grasped His promise right and fully, oh, how we would wish to die! How would we bless our departing saints and bid them good cheer when they fall asleep to live forever.

Finally, the death of God's saints is precious in His sight, because in His divine wisdom, which pierces heaven and earth, time and eternity, He will also attend to their mortal remains. He not only instructed His Church to bestow honorable care on the burial of His saints, but He also assures us: What is now sown in corruption will be raised incorruptible; what is now sown in dishonor will be raised in glory; what is now sown in weakness will be raised in power; what is now sown a natural body will be raised a spiritual body. And again: When they "that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, *He shall come to be glorified in His saints*, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."

Do not, therefore, lament so as to say: O Lilly, we shall never, never see thee again! You will see her again after sleeping the sweet sleep of the righteous saints, in incorruptible glory.

Do not forget, dear mourners, to examine the true nature of your grief, and to lay to heart the serious words of the prophet Jeremiah: "O Lord, Thy eyes are on the truth. Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they refused correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return." Let us see to it carefully, prayerfully, that we become and remain the Lord's saints: He will see to it that our death be precious in His sight. For God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Amen.

C. A. F.

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## Outlines for Sermons on the Gospel-Lessons.

### Pentecost.

JOHN 14, 23—31.

To-day we commemorate the wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we must be careful lest we misunderstand this. On the one hand, we must remember that the Holy Ghost was in all believers in the Old Testament days, from the very beginning. No man was ever saved, except by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, we must never forget that after Christ's ascension the Holy Ghost was poured down on men with far greater energy as individuals, and with far wider influence on the nations of the world at large, than ever before, Acts 2, 16—21. In our Gospel-lesson Christ speaks of the pentecostal influence and blessing, describing a true pentecostal Christian.

### THE PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIAN.

#### I. *His character.* Christ says:

a. He "will love me." *Luther*: "This is the characteristic of the true Christian, that he loves Christ from the heart." "Therefore I will give you a certain sign as to who are the true Christians, who are in me and I in them; namely, this, that they love me."—But how is it that Christ here refers to love and not to faith, as He is wont to do? *Luther*: "We answer: It is all the same . . . except through faith." (*House-Postil*, vol. II, p. 429.)

b. "He will keep my words." a. "My words." His sayings, v. 24; His voice, John 10, 27; the Father's Word, v. 24. What is Christ's Word? Why Christ's Word? Matt. 28, 20. Rom. 1, 16. *β.* "He will keep." Luke 11, 28. John 8, 47. 1 Thess. 2, 13. James 1, 22. Matt. 7, 21. Luke 6, 46. Rom. 2, 13. *Luther*: "These words are those concerning His death . . . as God aforetime ordered it." (*Ib.*, p. 431.)

*Application*: Keeping Christ's Word is indeed the best test of love to Christ. It is not talking about religion, but steadily doing Christ's will and walking in Christ's ways: that is the test and proof of our being true Christians. Where the Holy Ghost is, there will be love and obedience. Faith in the blood of Christ must always be attended by loving obedience to the will of Christ.

#### II. *His privilege.* Christ assures him:

a. Of God the Father's love. "My Father will love him." *Luther*: "Surely, this is great consolation . . . Holy Ghost to abide with you," (*Ib.*, p. 431 f.)

b. Of the Holy Trinity's abode. "And we will . . . abide with him." Indeed, a glorious Pentecost and an excellent manifestation of God's love. *Luther*: "We are in heaven . . . into our hearts." (*Ib.*, p. 432.)

c. Of the Holy Ghost's instructions. "The Comforter shall teach . . . said unto you." *Luther*: "Here Christ describes the office . . . farther than the Word, John 16, 14. 15, 26." (*Notes on the Gospels*, p. 354.)

d. Of His peace. "Peace I leave . . . give unto you." Peace is the peculiar gift of Christ: not money, not honor, not worldly ease. Inward peace of conscience arising from a sense of pardoned sin and reconciliation with God. This peace is the property of all believers, whether high or low, rich or poor. The peace which Christ gives He calls "my peace." It is His peace, because He bought it by His own blood, purchased it by His own vicarious sacrifice.

J. C. A.

### Pentecost Monday.

JOHN 3, 16—21.

The coming festival of the Holy Trinity is celebrated in commemoration of the great mystery of *God's essence*: one God, but three persons. To-day's Gospel-lesson forms a fitting prelude to that great theme, in that it speaks of the *work of God* for the salvation of man. It teaches us that this is entirely the work of God. God the Father gave His Son for the redemption of the world. The Son willingly came to accomplish the Father's gracious will, vv. 16. 17.—The rest of the lesson treats of the work of the Holy Spirit, though His name is not mentioned. Let us consider:

#### SANCTIFICATION, THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST.

- I. *Man cannot work his own sanctification.*
- II. *The Holy Ghost alone can accomplish this work.*

#### I.

In his natural condition man is in a state of "condemnation," v. 19a, because

a. Man "loves darkness rather than light," v. 19. The "light that came into the world" is the Gospel; cf. John 1, 4. 9; 8, 12. This "light" was given for all, John 1, 9 ("all men"). "God loved the world," v. 16. But men "love the darkness rather than the light," i. e., they love sin, reject the Gospel and their Savior; they are given to unbelief. (God = Source of all light; sin = separation from God, hence spiritual darkness here, and eternal darkness in the world to come, Rom. 1, 21. Matt. 8, 12, etc.)

b. Men do hate the light and love the darkness, because "their deeds are evil," v. 19 (men, in their natural condition, cannot do otherwise than sin, Rom. 8, 7. 1 Cor. 2, 12); lest their "deeds should be reproved," v. 20. (Conscience, knowledge of his sin and its punishment, causes man to flee from God, to conceal himself from Him, so as to escape His wrath, but it does not drive him to God.)

c. Therefore man "cannot by his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, his Lord, or come to Him.

## II.

The Holy Ghost alone can sanctify man; v. 21: "wrought in God," i. e., both through God's power and according to God's will. God, in particular the Holy Ghost, works good deeds through the Christian, 1 Cor. 6, 11; 12, 3. John 15, 26.

a. Accordingly, the Holy Ghost works the faith mentioned vv. 16, 18 ("believeth"); for *a.* faith is the indispensable prerequisite for performing God-pleasing works, Rom. 8, 8; 14, 23. Tit. 1, 15, because God has no pleasure in the unsanctified person of the natural man, and so also his works are an abomination to Him; only by faith, which appropriates Christ's righteousness, can man and his works become pleasing to God. *B.* It is therefore by working faith in man that the Holy Ghost works also God-pleasing works through him, for faith cannot but produce good works, Gal. 5, 6. James 2, 18 f.

b. Once faith has been wrought, man becomes a coworker with God in the work of sanctification, 2 Cor. 6, 1. *a.* He is now no longer dead, but has spiritual life; *B.* and so, in virtue of this new spiritual life, can assist in the work of perfecting his sanctification.

G. L.

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### First Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 16, 19—31.

Our Gospel tells us of a rich man and a beggar. These are the two extremes in the world: the rich on the one side and the poor on the other. And we know that, according to the divine order of things, there will always be these two classes, the rich and the poor, Prov. 22, 2. The Socialists' dream will never be realized, the wealth of this world will never be equally distributed so that we shall have no more poor among us, John 12, 8.—Whether we be rich or poor, we should always be careful to walk in the commandments of the Lord, and always make the best of our situation in which God has placed us; for there is danger and blessing in both.

#### RICHES AND POVERTY—THEIR DANGER AND THEIR BLESSING.

I. *The danger and blessing of riches.*

II. *The danger and blessing of poverty.*

## I.

a. *Dangers of riches.*—*a.* Vv. 19. 25. Here some of the dangers are pointed out that attend great wealth. Is not this one of the greatest dangers of wealth that it leads to damnable pride? Do not many of the rich look down upon the poor as an inferior class? Do they not deem themselves more because they can wear purple and fine linen? The rich man fared sumptuously every day, and is not this one of the dangers of wealth that it leads men to make their belly their god, that it is conducive to sluggishness and an easy life? Do not many of the rich make the poor work for them at starvation wages, and pocket the profit of the poor man's hard toil and labor, and fare sumptuously every day? Does not wealth make some men so heartless that in the race and chase after the dollar they grow hard and cold, and pay no attention and show no sympathy to the wretched and poor that lie before their gate? Did not the dogs appear to show more sympathy to Lazarus than the rich man?—*b.* But the greatest danger of wealth is that it is very apt to turn man's heart away from his God, and to make him lose his own soul, Matt. 19, 24. Mark 8, 36. The rich man lived for this world, enjoyed this present life, and gave no thought to the world which is to come. And what became of him after death? Vv. 23—26. What a curse did the rich man's wealth prove to be to him!—Herein lies the great danger of wealth, that unto most men it is a temptation and a snare to lead them into eternal damnation.

b. *Blessing of riches.*—It is not God's will and purpose that riches should be a curse to man. God has intended wealth for a blessing. When wealth proves a curse, it is shamefully abused, and the right use of wealth will never lead a man away from his God, or make him neglect the welfare of his soul. How much good could the rich man have done to Lazarus, how much suffering could he have alleviated! His wealth certainly did not prevent him from extending spiritual aid also to his brethren for whom he shows such great concern, vv. 27. 28. When a man succeeds in the world and accumulates wealth, we say that God *blessed* him with riches; and his riches should be a blessing to him and others, Luke 16, 9. Wealthy Christians will consider themselves stewards, aid the poor, give to the church according to their means, help struggling missions, and thus their riches will be a blessing.

## II.

a. *Dangers of poverty.*—A vivid description of poverty in vv. 20. 21. This was a case of extreme poverty. Lazarus possessed nothing but the rags which he wore upon his back, and his illness incapacitated him for work, so that he could not earn the scantiest

living. What a world of misery does poverty convey! The danger of poverty is that it is very apt to fill men with bitterness against God and man. The poor are easily misled to accuse God of partiality in favoring the rich. When they behold the stately mansions of the rich, when they see the comfort and luxury which the rich enjoy, and compare therewith their miserable state and condition, they are easily led to envy the so-called higher classes, and to be discontented with their lot in this life, to look upon the rich as their enemies, to resort to all sorts of unlawful means that they might better their condition. Solomon therefore says: Prov. 30, 7—9.—Nobody will deny that such are the dangers which attend poverty, though Lazarus in our text escaped these dangers by the grace of God.

b. *Blessing of poverty.*—*a.* How can poverty be a blessing? Is it a desirable thing to be poor? Is not poverty in every shape and form a curse? No; as poverty is never a shame, so is it never a curse, unless you make it a curse unto yourself. Though you be ever so poor in earthly goods, you can inherit God's blessing, and poverty can be the very means of your blessing. Look at poor Lazarus. Though he had to suffer misery and want in this world, was not his name written in the book of life? The poor, as a rule, have no idea of the worry, and care, and fretting which wealth brings to the rich. David therefore says: Ps. 39, 6. Is it not a blessing not to be burdened with these troublesome cares which riches convey? A proverb says: "Gold can buy nearly everything in this world except that which a man wants most—happiness," and surely, many a poor man would not envy the rich if he could behold the unhappiness that dwells in so many luxurious homes. And this fact must also be borne in mind that God has His kingdom especially among the poor. Poverty is always more apt to make a man understand that this world is not his true home, and to make him look for an eternal home in heaven, 1 Cor. 1, 26. 27.—*β.* But the best thing we are told of Lazarus is that he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. What a happy change! What harm could death do him? Would he have exchanged with the rich man? Was it not better to be poor upon earth and rich in heaven, than to be rich upon earth and suffer eternal torment?—Let us not murmur, if it is our lot to be poor. The Lord will provide. Our treasure is in heaven. Let us hear Moses and the Prophets, admit our sinfulness, believe in the Savior Jesus, who died on the cross for our transgressions, and walk in the commandments of the Lord. And when we are called hence, we shall behold that our trust has not been in vain, and in heaven we shall be comforted forever and ever.

H. S.